

SHENG SHIH-TS'AI'S REFORM PROGRAMS IN SINKIANG: IDEALISM OR OPPORTUNISM?*

By

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Unlike many regional militarists, Sheng Shih-ts'ai 盛世才 was not a native of the province he controlled in 1933-1944. He was born and brought up in Manchuria, a "cradle of conflict" between Russia and Japan.⁽¹⁾ He received his education in Shanghai 上海 and Tokyo 東京, and he later participated in Chiang Kai-shek's 蔣介石 Northern Expedition. He went to Sinkiang 新疆 for the first time in 1930 at the mature age of thirty-five. In the next three years, he wielded little power over the "old-fashioned feudal bureaucracy" dominated by Governor Chin Shu-jen 金樹仁 and his close associates.⁽²⁾

Sheng became *tupan* 督辦 in 1933 when Sinkiang was afflicted by political turmoil. Soviet Russia, Japan, and British India were all eager to fish in

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(1) The term is borrowed from Owen Lattimore, *Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1932).

(2) Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1950), p. 51. For Sheng's life during the pre-1933 years, see my article, "The Road to Power: Sheng Shih-ts'ai's Early Years in Sinkiang, 1930-1934," *Journal of Oriental Studies* (Hong Kong), VII, No. 2 (July 1969), pp. 224-60. Cf. Wei Chung-t'ien 魏中天, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai ju-ko t'ung-chih Hsin-chiang* 盛世才如何統治新疆 [How Sheng Shih-ts'ai Governed Sinkiang] (Chungking: Hai-wai t'ung-hsin she, 1947), pp. 4-7; Kuang Lu 廣祿 et al., *Sheng Shih-ts'ai tsen-yang t'ung-chih Hsin-chiang* 盛世才怎樣統治新疆 [How Sheng Shih-ts'ai Governed Sinkiang] (Taipei: Chung-kuo pien-cheng hsueh-hui, 1954), pp. 3-4; and Tu Chung-yuan 杜重遠, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai yu Hsin Hsin-chiang* 盛世才與新新疆 [Sheng Shih-ts'ai and the New Sinkiang] (Hankow: Sheng-huo shu-tien, 1938), pp. 31-35.

troubled waters. The Kuomintang government was too much weakened by internal dissension to be of any assistance. Indeed, Sheng often took advantage of such dissension to strengthen his own position in the province. During the twelve years of his governorship, Sheng played the part of a juggler, trying to keep several balls in the air at the same time. In order to win Soviet aid, he pursued a strongly pro-Russian policy to the extent of damaging China's sovereignty in Sinkiang. In 1942, however, he shifted his allegiance to Chungking 重慶 when Moscow seemed to be on the verge of military defeat.⁽³⁾ His rule in the province was apparently an example of political opportunism.

The Chinese constituted only six percent of Sinkiang's population. As *tupan*, Sheng needed the support of the subject nationalities, and he promised them political and racial equality, as well as social and economic well-being. He called for the creation of a "New Sinkiang." In 1934, he issued an Eight-Point Declaration as basis for his reform program, and he announced his Six Great Policies in 1935-1936. Did these pronouncements reflect his genuine concern for the non-Chinese peoples, or were they merely intended to serve his own political interests? The answers to these questions should be important in any evaluation of his leadership in the province.

Sheng Shih-ts'ai's Political Thought

Sheng was born in Liaoning 遼寧 on December 3, 1895. Like many Chinese of his era, the future governor of Sinkiang was a nationalist. In 1938, he told a prominent journalist, Ch'en Chi-ying 陳紀澄, that nationalism and socialism were two motivating forces behind his reform program.⁽⁴⁾ In an interview with me on July 30, 1964, Sheng recalled that his father had taught him "to be useful to his country." Indeed, as a child in South Manchuria,

(3) For an analysis of Sheng's relations with the Kuomintang government in 1933-1944, see my chapter, "Regionalism and Central Power: Sheng Shih-ts'ai in Sinkiang, 1933-1944," in F. Gilbert Chan, ed., *China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927-1949* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 127-49.

(4) Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an* 新疆鳥瞰 [A Bird's-Eye View of Sinkiang] (Chungking: Commercial Press, 1941), p. 7.

he had become familiar with stories of imperialist exploitation. In 1915, when he was studying at Waseda University, his nationalistic outbursts against foreign aggression impressed many of his fellow-students. They soon sent him home to take part in anti-Japanese demonstrations.⁽⁵⁾ This experience had a profound influence on him; to a considerable extent, it accounted for his hostile attitude toward Japan during his rule in Sinkiang.

Thanks to his nationalistic convictions, Sheng blamed imperialism for Sinkiang's many problems. He claimed, for example, that capitalist exploitation had been responsible for the economic stagnation of the province. In his opinion, hatred, violence, and distrust among the non-Chinese peoples were "direct consequences of imperialist persecution of the weak races."⁽⁶⁾ He singled out Japan for condemnation, insisting that Tokyo had actually dispatched "agents" to Sinkiang for the purpose of "destroying" Russia.⁽⁷⁾ He thus rallied the subject nationalities behind the banners of anti-imperialism and anti-Fascism, maintaining that their heroic efforts represented an important part of the worldwide struggle against aggression.⁽⁸⁾

To resist Japanese encroachment, Sheng proposed to establish a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union. He traced the origins of his policies of anti-imperialism and pro-Russianism to Sun Yat-sen's 孫逸仙 Principle of Nationalism.⁽⁹⁾ In a letter to Chiang Kai-shek on July 7, 1942, as well as in his other writings, Sheng argued that the Soviet leaders were peaceful and non-aggressive; they were willing to aid the weak races. Besides, their assistance was

(5) Tu, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, p. 32.

(6) Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu* 政府目前主要任務 [The Present Major Tasks of the Government] (Urumchi: Hsin-chiang min-chung fan-ti lien-ho-hui, 1941), p. 1.

(7) *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20. Cf. Lars-Erik Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang, 1918-1934* (Stockholm: Esselte Studium, 1977), in which the author argues that Japanese influence in the province was "a myth," which served "mainly Soviet propaganda purposes" (p. 132). See also pp. 7, 51, 119.

(8) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, p. 25.

(9) Quoted in Hsu Ch'ung-hao, 許崇灝 *Hsin-chiang chih-luch* 新疆誌略 [A Brief Survey of Sinkiang] (Shanghai: Cheng-chung shu-chu, 1947), p. 271. See also Li Ying-ch'i's 李英奇 speech in *Hsin-chiang jih-pao* 新疆日報 [Sinkiang Daily], April 15, 1943. Li was one of Sheng's closest associates in the province.

indispensable to Sinkiang's task of modernization.⁽¹⁰⁾ Hence, pro-Russianism was the core of Sheng's reform program. In fact, as he contended, his friendship with Moscow helped to insure that Sinkiang would remain "permanently" a Chinese province.⁽¹¹⁾

It may be oversimplified to dismiss Sheng's pro-Russian leanings during his governorship as political opportunism; they could well have been guided, at least partially, by his ideological convictions. At the age of seventeen, Sheng studied in Shanghai, where he became friendly with teachers and students of "radical inclination." He admitted to have been converted to Marxism in 1919. He read "with interest" such books as *The Economic Interpretation of History* and *The Philosophy of Hegel*.⁽¹²⁾ His later publications reflected his familiarity with the Marxist polemics. His political opponents charged that he had been "intoxicated with Communism" during his second stay in Japan in the mid-1920s.⁽¹³⁾ He made a similar confession in his 1942 letter to Chiang Kai-shek. Because of his belief in Marxism, Sheng did not join the Kuomintang when he was on Chiang's staff in 1927-1929.⁽¹⁴⁾

Sheng had clearly been attracted by the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917. According to him, this "unprecedented" victory was historically significant. It seriously weakened the "structural foundations" of capitalism and imperialism, and it strengthened the determination of the ethnic minorities to struggle for their liberation. The 1917 Revolution gave birth to a "new world" of socialism, in which people of all classes enjoyed the "heavenly

(10) Sheng's letter to Chiang is included in Wai-chiao-pu 外交部 [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh* 蘇聯對新疆之經濟侵略 [Soviet Economic Aggression Against Sinkiang] (Taipei: Wai-chiao-pu, 1950), pp. 55-69. See also Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 26-31.

(11) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 18-21.

(12) Allen S. Whiting and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1958), Pt. I, pp. 13, 15. Part I of this book, "Soviet Strategy in Sinkiang, 1933-49," is an analysis of the topic by Whiting, while Part II, "Red Failure in Sinkiang," is a translation of Sheng's autobiography; hereinafter cited, respectively, as SSIS and RFIS.

(13) Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, p. 3.

(14) Wai-chiao-pu, *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh*, p. 55; and SSIS, p. 15.

bliss" of liberty, equality, and prosperity.⁽¹⁵⁾ Thanks to his infatuation with this utopia of Communism, Sheng remained blind to Stalin's bloody purges of the 1930s. Instead, he praised the Soviet leader for his successful implementation of the five-year plans of national reconstruction. He also hailed Russia as a "bastion of peace," ready to help all weak nations to resist the aggression of the "Fascist powers."⁽¹⁶⁾

Sheng's interpretations of Chinese history were predominantly affected by his idealization of the Russian Revolution. His writings on China were replete with the Marxist rhetoric of economic determinism. While he was proud of his national heritage, he was critical of the leadership of the "feudal rulers" of the imperial epoch. In his analysis of the modern era, he emphasized the political significance of peasant uprisings, and he charged that the imperialist forces had turned China into a semi-colony, subjecting its people to a life of poverty and misery. He thus extolled the xenophobic madness of the Boxers, whereas claiming that the 1911 Revolution had been "a failure." He blamed the anti-Manchu leaders for their unwillingness to adopt a strong stance on anti-imperialism. Nonetheless, he complimented Sun Yat-sen on his efforts to reorganize the Kuomintang on the basis of his "Three Great Policies." Above all, Sheng glorified the Chinese people's heroic defense of their motherland against Japanese invasion.⁽¹⁷⁾

Sheng's portrayals of Sinkiang were uniformly favorable. He argued that the province, "a vast land of exceptional beauty," was so richly endowed with natural resources that its people should never have been poor and backward.⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet, as a result of the "ignorance and selfishness" of his two predecessors, Yang Tseng-hsin 楊增新 and Chin Shu-jen, Sinkiang had become "the land of beggars who begged with gold rice-bowls." These governors were responsible

(15) Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Lu ta cheng-ts'e chiao-ch'eng* 六大政策教程 [A Manual of the Six Great Policies] (Urumchi: Hsin-chiang min-chung fan-ti lien-ho-hui, 1942), I, pp. 3-4, 16-34.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

(17) *Ibid.*, II, pp. 1-140.

(18) RFIS, pp. 151-55.

for the "maladministration and incompetency" of the provincial government. Under their "despotic" rule, nepotism, bribery, and embezzlement were common among officials. The living conditions of the people were "hellish." Sinkiang was, in Sheng's opinion, in desperate need of reconstruction.⁽¹⁹⁾ While Chang Ch'ien 張騫 of the Han dynasty and Tso Tsung-t'ang 左宗棠 in the nineteenth century had both stressed the strategic importance of China's "Western Regions," Sheng was the first ruler of the province to cherish the vision of a "New Sinkiang."⁽²⁰⁾

Most significant of all, Sheng chastised his two predecessors for their "failure ... to carry out a program of racial equality."⁽²¹⁾ Yang Tseng-hsin and Chin Shu-jen had been preoccupied, during their governorships, with consolidating their political authority in the province. They took the superiority of the Han Chinese for granted, and they adopted the policy of "divide and rule" toward the subject races. Moreover, they were intolerant of the customs and religious practices of these peoples. In the end, the non-Chinese nationalities regarded themselves as subjects of an alien government, instead of citizens of a harmonious society. Owen Lattimore compares their status in Sinkiang with that of the Indians under British domination.⁽²²⁾

Sheng described this northwestern province as "a living ethnological museum," and he divided its peoples into fourteen different nationalities.⁽²³⁾ Inspired by the Soviet polemics, he often talked about liberating the subject races

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 156; Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 2, 5, 6; and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, "Hsin-chi ng shih-nien hui-i-lu" 新疆十年回憶錄 [Recollections of Ten Years in Sinkiang], *Tzu-li wan-pao* 自立晚報 [Independent Evening Press] (Taipei), October 4, 1952; October 5, 1952; and October 6, 1952. The last source is Sheng's memoirs, published serially in September-December 1952.

(20) For reports on Sheng's "New Sinkiang," see Tu, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 80-91; and Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 25-87.

(21) RFIS, p. 156.

(22) Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, p. 3.

(23) RFIS, p. 156; and Tu, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 54-60. The fourteen races were, namely, Han Chinese, Uighur, Mongol, Kazakh, Moslem or Tungan, Sibo, Solon, Manchu, Kirghiz, White Russian, Taranchi, Tadjik, Tartar, and Uzbek. Sheng's detractors dismiss this classification as another form of "divide and rule." See Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, p. 16.

from political oppression, and he listed this as one of the principal goals of his governorship in Sinkiang. He had witnessed the atrocities of the Hami哈密 insurrection, caused by Chin Shu-jen's ill-advised policies toward the Uighurs.⁽²⁴⁾ The suppression of the rebellion in 1934 did not solve the many problems of the province. Sheng was convinced that the only way to regain the favor of the non-Chinese peoples was to eliminate the causes of racial antagonism. He had learned his lesson from Chin's political demise; he was too clever to repeat Chin's mistakes and run the risk of having Chin's fate befall on him. Hence, he promised that racial equality would become an important landmark in his utopia of the "New Sinkiang."

Sheng was, according to Owen Lattimore, "a mixture of the revolutionary and the military adventurer."⁽²⁵⁾ In addition to his Soviet-oriented idealism, the *tupan* was frequently motivated by practical considerations of self-interests. He had, after all, been baptized in the politics of warlordism. In the mid-1920s, for example, he supported Kuo Sung-ling 郭松齡 in an abortive campaign against Chang Tso-lin 張作霖. Moreover, when he assumed the governorship in Sinkiang in 1933, Sheng was far from being the most dominant leader in the province. He had to struggle for power with Liu Wen-lung 劉文龍 and the "feudal" bureaucrats, as well as with two influential militarists, Ma Chung-ying 馬仲英 and Chang P'ei-yuan 張培元.⁽²⁶⁾ As a native of Manchuria, Sheng was an outsider trapped in the quagmire of Sinkiang politics. He needed

(24) For details of the Hami insurrection, see Chan, "Road to Power," pp. 234-40; and Chan, "Regionalism and Central Power," pp. 129-32. See also Sven Hedin, *The Flight of "Big Horse": The Trail of War in Central Asia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1936); Chang Ta-chun 張達鈞, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang* 四十年動亂新疆 [Forty Years of Turmoil in Sinkiang] (Hong Kong: Asia Press Ltd., 1956), pp. 26-37; and Wu Ai-ch'en 吳藹宸, *Hsin-chiang chi-yu* 新疆紀遊 [Records of Travels in Sinkiang] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), pp. 53-63.

(25) Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, pp. 214-15. Ch'en Chi-ying hails the *tupan* as "a daring and yet careful militarist, as well as a great politician, possessing a scientific mind replete with new ideas." See Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 1. Jack Chen, however, describes Sheng as "an inept opportunist" and "a poor reader of the international situation." See Chen, *The Sinkiang Story* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 190.

(26) Chan, "Regionalism and Central Power," p. 132.

support to strengthen his fragile position in the province.

Sheng was bitterly disappointed because of Nanking's 南京 failure to offer him assistance. He had received financial aid from Chiang Kai-shek in the mid-1920s, when Chang Tso-lin tried to prevent him from continuing his studies at Shikan Gakko. Sheng had, since then, regarded Chiang as his patron. In fact, Chiang may have endorsed Sheng's decision to go to Sinkiang in 1929.⁽²⁷⁾ Sheng was therefore embarrassed and frustrated when his Tungan rival, Ma Chung-ying, was appointed by the Kuomintang government as commander of the thirty-sixth division of the national army. Indeed, Ma also claimed to have "learned the arts of war" from Chiang Kai-shek.⁽²⁸⁾ Thanks to this intricate web of personal ties, Sheng could not be sure of Nanking's position during his armed conflicts with Ma in 1933-1934.

Sheng's relations with the Kuomintang were further strained in June 1933 with the arrival of Huang Mu-sung 黃慕松 at Urumchi 烏魯木齊. As Nanking's pacification commissioner, Huang was ignorant of frontier problems, and his arrogant behavior offended some provincial leaders.⁽²⁹⁾ Sheng was waiting to be confirmed by the Kuomintang government as Sinkiang's *tupan*, and he suspected that Huang's visit would affect Nanking's decision on his political career. Urumchi was flooded with rumors. One alleged that Huang had already been given the governorship of this northwestern borderland, whereas another maintained that Chiang Kai-shek planned to divide Sinkiang into several smaller provinces.⁽³⁰⁾ Sheng exploited the dissension within the Kuomintang,

(27) Eric Teichman, *Journey to Turkistan* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1937), pp. 104-105; Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940), p. 201, n. 82; and Edgar Snow, *The Battle for Asia* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1941), p. 306.

(28) Aitcher K. Wu, *Turkistan Tumult* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1939), p. 156. According to David J. Dallin, Nanking was dissatisfied with the pro-Soviet inclinations of the Sinkiang government and was prepared to recognize Ma's control over the province. See Dallin, *Soviet Russia and the Far East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 97.

(29) Wu, *Turkistan Tumult*, p. 171.

(30) Chan, "Regionalism and Central Power," p. 134; and Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests*, p. 126.

and he charged that Huang, an agent of Wang Ching-wei 汪精衛, plotted with Liu Wen-lung, Chang P'ei-yuan, and Ma Chung-ying to overthrow the provincial government.⁽³¹⁾ Shortly afterward, Huang left Sinkiang in disgrace. In September, Sheng was installed in office by Lo Wen-kan 羅文幹.

Nanking's clumsy intervention in Sinkiang politics was counterproductive; it demonstrated, in Sheng's opinion, the weakness of central authority in China. The *tupan* was henceforth certain that he "could expect little help" from the Kuomintang government.⁽³²⁾ After Liu Wen-lung's purge in the fall of 1933, Sheng created a new bureaucratic hierarchy to replace the one established by his predecessors. He appointed his brothers, father-in-law, brothers-in-law, and other men of his choice to high government positions. He attracted the support of Tu Chung-yuan 杜重遠, a radical journalist who had known the *tupan* since childhood. During the post-1937 years, Sheng even rallied under his reformist banner such Chinese Communists as Ch'en T'an-ch'iu 陳潭秋, Teng Fa 鄧發, and Yang Chih-hua 楊之華 (wife of Ch'u Ch'iu-pai 瞿秋白). Mao Tse-tung 毛澤東 sent his brother, Tse-min 澤民, to Urumchi to act as Sheng's "personal adviser and assistant."⁽³³⁾ Meanwhile, Sheng kept the Kuomintang government at a distance, pledging only token allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek, his erstwhile patron.

The *tupan* was, however, politically insecure. The non-Chinese peoples remained rebellious after the bloody suppression of the Hami insurrection.

(31) SSIS, p. 24; Sheng, "Hsin-chiang shih-nien hui-i-lu," October 26, 1952; P'eng Chao-hsien 彭昭賢, "Cheng-hai fou-ch'en hua tang-nien: P'eng Chao-hsien hui-i-lu" 政海浮沉話當年——彭昭賢回憶錄 [Talks About Rise and Fall in the Politics of Past Years: P'eng Chao-hsien's Memoirs], in P'eng Chao-hsien 彭昭賢, Sheng Shih-ts'ai 盛世才, and Chang Ta-chun 張大軍, *Wu-shih-nien cheng-chih feng-yun: T'ien-shan nan-pei* 五十年政海風雲——天山南北 [Fifty Years of Political Turmoil: South and North of T'ien-shan] (Taipei: Ch'un-ch'iu ch'u-pan-she, 1967), p. 37.

(32) RFIS, p. 183. See also p. 162. Lars-Erik Nyman depicts Nanking's intervention as "awkward and powerless." See Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests*, p. 131.

(33) Quoted from Mao Tse-tung's letter to the *tupan*, February 4, 1942, in RFIS, p. 232. For the support given to Sheng by the "thousands of ardent patriots, who... were disappointed in the Kuomintang's refusal to make a stand against the Japanese," see Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, pp. 216-19.

Sheng was also fearful of the aggressive designs of Japan and British India. He was genuinely concerned about his own safety, in view of Yang Tseng-hsin's assassination in July 1928. He recalled in his memoirs, "I had to cope with repeated threats to my family as well as to myself."⁽³⁴⁾ He was "a man possessed of a spy mania," and his "capacity for suspicion was boundless." According to Wendell L. Willkie, who visited Sinkiang in 1942, the stories Sheng told him "of murder, intrigue, espionage, and counterespionage sounded like a dime thriller."⁽³⁵⁾ In response to this strong feeling of insecurity, the *tupan* relied on political repression to solidify his shaky position in the province. Tu Chung-yuan and Mao Tse-min were among the victims in the many purges during his governorship.

Sheng was a ruler of sharp contradictions. While he used terrorism freely for personal gains, he was, too, determined to bring to Sinkiang "a new revolutionary administration which could replace the old decadent regime."⁽³⁶⁾ He eagerly sought the assistance of Soviet Russia and the subject nationalities, which he needed to buttress his authority in the province. As he formulated his reform programs, he allowed political opportunism to merge with his radical idealism. He defended his pro-Moscow leanings by contending that he had merely followed Chin Shu-jen's precedent. In the era of warlordism, it was not unusual for a regional militarist to adopt a foreign policy without consulting the central government. Besides, as Sheng bluntly proclaimed, "Nanking lacked the power to remove me."⁽³⁷⁾ Nevertheless, he rejected the charge of opportunism, insisting that his pro-Russian orientation was "a positive policy of

(34) RFIS, p. 162.

(35) Willkie, *One World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1943), p. 114.

(36) RFIS, p. 159.

(37) *Ibid.*, p. 207. According to Peter Fleming, *News from Tartary: A Journey from Peking to Kashmir* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1936), "for two years Sinkiang had been virtually cut off from the rest of China." Sheng "rarely answered, and never demurred to, the central government's telegraphic protests at his Russian affiliations" (p. 30). Nevertheless, Ch'en Chi-ying refers to Sheng's "genuine respect" for Chiang Kai-shek, although the *tupan* was extremely critical of Wang Ching-wei. See Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 4.

friendship." By following the Soviet model of reconstruction, he hoped to turn Sinkiang into a "progressive" and "prosperous" province, with its inhabitants of different nationalities "united in peaceful brotherhood."⁽³⁸⁾

Sheng Shih-ts'ai's Reform Programs and the "New Sinkiang"

In August 1934, sixteen months after his dramatic rise to power, Sheng announced his plan to reshape Sinkiang. In his Eight-Point Declaration, he called for (1) equality among races; (2) religious freedom; (3) rural relief; (4) financial reforms; (5) administrative reforms; (6) extension of education; (7) introduction of local self-government; and (8) judicial reforms.⁽³⁹⁾ Later in the same month, he affirmed that the nine major "duties" of his provincial government were: (1) to eradicate corruption; (2) to develop economy and culture; (3) to maintain peace by avoiding war; (4) to mobilize all manpower for the cultivation of land; (5) to improve communication facilities; (6) to keep Sinkiang permanently a Chinese province; (7) to fight against imperialism and Fascism and to sustain a close relationship with Soviet Russia; (8) to reconstruct a "New Sinkiang;" and (9) to protect the positions and privileges of religious leaders.⁽⁴⁰⁾

With those pronouncements, Sheng courted the support of the non-Chinese peoples. He needed it to insure his own political survival in the province and, more significantly, to realize his dream of a "New Sinkiang." His reform programs thus served both purposes, satisfying his opportunistic demands as well as his idealistic aspirations. He went beyond the vague promise of racial equality to initiate changes which aimed at improving the livelihood of the subject nationalities. In order to bring about immediate rural relief, for example, he distributed cattle, sheep, and seeds to peasants, and he instructed

(38) RFIS, pp. 161, 163.

(39) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 1-6. Cf. Hsu, *Hsin-chiang chih-lueh*, pp. 266-69; Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 10-17; and Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, pp. 65-67.

(40) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 7-35; and Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, pp. 67-72.

the provincial bank to loan money to the needy people. He vowed to place Sinkiang's economy on a sound basis by stipulating that every government department should prepare an annual budget; pains should also be taken to develop new sources of revenue while reducing the expenditure.⁽⁴¹⁾

Sheng emphasized the importance of education in his task of provincial reconstruction. He favored the principle of "cultural autonomy," and he insisted that all ethnic groups should establish schools of their own, in which their native languages would be taught. He dismissed the charge that this was reminiscent of the traditional Chinese policy of "divide and rule," arguing that such separation was necessary to guarantee the success of future union.⁽⁴²⁾ In fact, with the increase of educational opportunities in the province, he was hopeful that self-government could be introduced to different local units in the near future. During that time, the subject peoples would enjoy the democratic right of choosing their political leaders in free elections. He predicted that Sinkiang would one day be ruled by a non-Chinese governor.⁽⁴³⁾

Sheng took steps to rid the provincial government of corruption and other political abuses, thereby demonstrating to the ethnic groups that his administration really wanted to serve their interests. He was disgusted when a retired district magistrate boasted in a banquet how much money he had illegally received during his term of office. Sheng dramatized his determination to correct such unethical behavior by punishing a corrupt official, Hsu Wen-pin 徐文彬, with a harsh death sentence. He, too, appointed to high-ranking positions young people with impressive qualifications, instead of following the common practice of nepotism.⁽⁴⁴⁾ He further announced that the human rights of the non-Chinese races would be safeguarded with the creation of an independent judiciary. Moreover, no death penalty could be inflicted upon a guilty person,

(41) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 3-4.

(42) *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6; 9-11.

(43) *Ibid.*, p. 6; and Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 6.

(44) Sheng, *Cheng-fu mu-ch'ien chu-yao jen-wu*, pp. 4-6.

even after a fair trial, without the approval of the Urumchi government. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

In spite of the boldness of these programs, Sheng remained politically cautious, trying his best to refrain from alienating the subject nationalities. He was particularly tolerant of their traditional ethnic customs and habits. Hence, he promised to protect the privileges of their religious leaders. He conceded that certain "feudal" practices could be valuable to a "backward" society. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ He was equally concerned about Nanking's reaction to his pro-Moscow leanings. His Eight-Point Declaration did not refer to Sinkiang's relations with the neighboring Soviet government. When he later listed his nine major "duties," he linked pro-Russianism with anti-imperialism and anti-Fascism. Japan was, after all, the common enemy of China and the Soviet Union. To assuage Nanking's suspicion of Moscow's designs on this north-western borderland, Sheng pledged that he would endeavor to keep Sinkiang "permanently" a Chinese province. ⁽⁴⁷⁾

After educating the non-Chinese peoples about the objectives of his administration, the *tupan* officially raised the banners of anti-imperialism, peace, and reconstruction in April 1935. In the following year, he publicized his programs of pro-Russianism, clean government, and racial equality. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Known together as the Six Great Policies, they constituted the ideological basis of Sheng's governorship in Sinkiang, until he shifted his loyalty from Stalin to Chiang Kai-shek in 1942. They reaffirmed Sheng's commitment to radical idealism. If successfully implemented, they could win for him the support of

(45) *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

(46) *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

(47) *Ibid.*, pp. 26-31. Ch'en Chi-ying notes that the subject nationalities were also "very unhappy" about the policy of pro-Russianism. See Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 22.

(48) On the promulgation of the Six Great Policies, see Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, p. 72. Cf. Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 21-22. Sheng's detractors charge that these policies, toned with Communist rhetoric, were a masquerade for the governor's pro-Russian leanings. See Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, p. 14; and Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, p. 65. Ch'en Chi-ying, however, argues that the Six Great Policies were a shining beacon guiding the reconstruction of a "New Sinkiang." See Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 1. Hsu Ch'ung-hao identifies these policies with Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People. See Hsu, *Hsin-chiang chih-lueh*, pp. 269-72.

the subject races and thereby solidify his authority in the province.

Sheng began, almost immediately, to mobilize the non-Chinese nationalities behind his reformist policies. He indoctrinated them about the danger of imperialism and Fascism. On August 1, 1935, he founded the Anti-Imperialist Association at Urumchi, and he published its propaganda organ, *Anti-Imperialist War Front* [Fan-ti chan-hsin 反帝戰線], in addition to such other periodicals as *Sinkiang's Youth* [Hsin-chiang ch'ing-nien 新疆青年] and *Sinkiang's Women* [Hsin-chiang fu-nu 新疆婦女]. He declared that he would turn the province into a powerful anti-Fascist fortress, while training its peoples for the campaign against Japanese aggression. Thanks to his efforts of politicization, the membership of the Anti-Imperialist Association increased from 2,489 in 1935 to 5,281 in 1937 and over 10,000 in 1939. (49)

In response to Sheng's encouragement, the subject races organized "cultural societies" to take charge of the education of their children; they no longer had to accept the cultural identity of the Chinese ruling minority. With the sponsorship of these societies, they built schools to teach their own languages, customs, and habits. By July 1938, 1,840 academic institutions of this nature had been established, with a total student enrollment of 105,087. The Uighurs, being the majority ethnic group in Sinkiang, supported 1,540 of these schools, which provided education for 89,804 of their children. (50) To substantiate Sheng's ideal of "cultural autonomy," Urumchi's principal newspaper, *Sinkiang Daily* [Hsin-chiang jih-pao 新疆日報], was published in seven different languages. Moreover, the provincial government had sent 329 non-Chinese students to Russia over these years, and they specialized in such fields as medicine, veterinary science, engineering, and agriculture. (51)

(49) Hsin Hsin-chiang yueh-k'an 新新疆月刊 [New Sinkiang Monthly], I, No. 1 (April 12, 1943), pp. 16-17; and Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 85-86. Chang Ta-chun contends that the publication of *Anti-Imperialist War Front* and *Sinkiang's Youth*, among others, was intended for the propagation of Marxism-Leninism in Sinkiang. See Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, p. 86. *Anti-Imperialist War Front* stopped publication in 1942.

(50) Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 36. Cf. Tu, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 80-84; Hsin Hsin-chiang yueh-k'an, I, No. 1, pp. 23-24, 70-74; and Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, p. 73.

(51) Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, p. 73; Chen, *Sinkiang Story*, pp. 188-89.

During the early epoch of Sheng's stewardship, the subject peoples enjoyed a considerable degree of political participation in the Urumchi government. Many were appointed to important official positions. To offer them opportunities to discuss his reform programs, Sheng invited representatives of the non-Chinese nationalities to attend conferences at the provincial capital. The first was convened in April 1935, the second in April 1936, and the third in October 1938. There were 510 delegates in the 1938 meeting.⁽⁵²⁾ This method of soliciting public opinion was a form of mass mobilization; it allowed Sheng's administration to maintain "a facade of democratic enlightenment."⁽⁵³⁾

With substantial financial and technical assistance from Soviet Russia, Sheng's attempts at provincial reconstruction were remarkably successful, especially in view of the Kuomintang's inability to lend its helping hands during the Sino-Japanese War. He initiated the first three-year plan in 1934, and this was followed by a second one in 1937, and a third one in 1941. He bought from Moscow valuable mechanical implements, and he employed Russian agricultural experts to help the peasants to organize experimental farms. In 1938, he claimed that Sinkiang had enough land under cultivation to support its rural population.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Meanwhile, there was significant progress in industry and commerce. Factories grew up in Urumchi, Ili 伊犁, Aksu 阿克蘇 and other cities. Communications, too, were improved, and many motor roads were constructed. During the period of 1933-1944, 1,350 miles of telephone lines were installed.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The most controversial component in Sheng's reform programs was his close relations with the Soviet Union. Many contemporaries believed, however, that

(52) Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 91-92. For the author's reports on the 1938 meeting, see pp. 89-143. Cf. Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, pp. 68-80; and Fleming, *News from Tartary*, p. 254.

(53) Fleming, *News from Tartary*, p. 254.

(54) Quoted from Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, p. 207. On the three-year plans, see Chang, *Sze-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, p. 83; and Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, pp. 75-76.

(55) Ch'en, *Hsin-chiang niao-k'an*, pp. 56-58; and *Hsin Hsin-chiang yueh-k'an*, I, No. 1, pp. 63-68.

the governor's pro-Russian leanings, though probably damaging to China's national interests, were needed to sustain the political and economic well-being of the province.⁽⁵⁶⁾ To restore peace to this frontier region, Sheng had relied upon Stalin's military support to crush the opposition forces of Ma Chung-ying and other rivals. In May 1935, the *tupan* secured from Moscow a loan of five million gold rubles.⁽⁵⁷⁾ These financial aids contributed to Sinkiang's success in reconstruction.

Nonetheless, in spite of his pledge to keep Sinkiang "permanently" a Chinese province, Sheng's behavior repeatedly undermined the Kuomintang's authority in this northwestern borderland. He concluded the 1935 loan agreement, for example, without Nanking's prior approval.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In August 1938, he traveled to Moscow to pay homage to Stalin. He became a member of the Russian Communist Party, thus submitting himself to the discipline of the Soviet leadership.⁽⁵⁹⁾ In a new agreement on November 26, 1940, he yielded to the neighboring government a fifty-year lease on Sinkiang's tin mines. In 1941, he proposed to establish a "full-fledged Soviet regime" in the province.⁽⁶⁰⁾ He had formerly maintained that his pro-Russian policy was necessary for his campaign against Japanese imperialism. Yet, this argument became invalid when Moscow and Tokyo concluded a nonaggression pact in April 1941. By turning Sinkiang into "a voluntary, disguised satellite of the Soviet Union," Sheng

(56) Huang Fen-sheng 黃奮生, *Pien-chiang cheng-chiao chih yen-chiu* 邊疆政教之研究 [Studies on Frontier Politics and Religions] (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1966), pp. 117-18; and Chou K'ai-ch'ing 周開慶, *Hsi-pei chien-ying* 西北剪影 [Reports on the Northwest] (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1968), p. 53.

(57) Wai-chiao-pu, *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh*, pp. 32-38; Kuang et al., *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 20-21; and Chang, *Szu-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, pp. 61-65.

(58) Wai-chiao-pu, *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh*, pp. 32-38.

(59) RFIS, pp. 191-208. Sheng later confessed that his Communist party membership had given Stalin "an instrument of blackmail" (p. 207).

(60) On the 1940 agreement, see Wai-chiao-pu, *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh*, pp. 39-75; Kuang et al., *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 21-28; RFIS, pp. 218-27; and Chang, *Szu-shih-nien tung-luan Hsin-chiang*, pp. 77-30. On Sheng's 1941 proposal, see his letter to Chiang Kai-shek, July 7, 1942, in Wai-chiao-pu, *Su-lien tui Hsin-chiang chih ching-chi ch'in-lueh*, pp. 59, 68-69.

damaged his otherwise impressive record in the province. ⁽⁶¹⁾

Sheng's reforms failed mostly because he placed opportunistic gains above his idealism, particularly during the latter half of his governorship. His acute sense of insecurity prevented him from trusting the subject nationalities. While he encouraged their leaders to take an active part in his administration, he depended increasingly on his wife, his father-in-law, and his two favorites, Li Ying-ch'i 李英奇 and Li P'u-lin 李溥霖. In the end, they had to resort to terrorism to buttress their fragile positions in the province. There were seven jails in Urumchi alone. The cells were so congested that each prisoner was given a space of only about thirty centimeters wide to sleep on. ⁽⁶²⁾ Sheng confessed that he had arrested 2,069 "conspirators" during the years of 1933-1944; 240 of them were executed. His detractors, however, insisted that more than 50,000 persons had been "murdered," and they identified 895 of these victims. ⁽⁶³⁾ In September 1944, when Sheng relinquished his governorship to become minister of agriculture and forestry in Chungking, he was "hated" as few men have ever been hated even in Sinkiang. ⁽⁶⁴⁾

Idealism or Opportunism?

Sheng was a complicated leader with very attractive qualifications. His dream of a "New Sinkiang," though unfulfilled, has definitely earned him a special place in the history of the province. Most likely, his interest in the subject races was genuine; he certainly paid more attention to their problems

(61) SSIS, p. 22. Peter Fleming observes that Sheng's "real masters" in Sinkiang were the Soviet civil and military advisers. The province, according to Fleming, was "run from Moscow." See Fleming, *News from Tartary*, pp. 30, 254.

(62) Chen, *Sinkiang Story*, p. 195.

(63) RFIS, pp. 270-71. Cf. Kuang et al., *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 35-49; and *Sheng Shih-ts'ai huo-Hsin chi-lueh chi-erh* 盛世才禍新紀略之二 [Brief Records of Sheng Shih-ts'ai's Devastation of Sinkiang, Part II] (mimeographed; n.p., n.d.). The last item was lent to me by Mr. Lin Pai-ya in Hong Kong; it was compiled by some of Sheng's victims. Jack Chen claims that "200,000 people were killed, arrested or disappeared" during Sheng's rule. See Chen, *Sinkiang Story*, p. 199.

(64) A. Doak Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1963), p. 247.

than his two immediate predecessors, Yang Tseng-hsin and Chin Shu-jen. For some time, the non-Chinese peoples supported him. Nevertheless, despite this early promise of success, his administration was a dismal failure by any standard. In November 1944, less than two months after his departure for Chungking, the subject nationalities in Ili rebelled, and Sinkiang was in a worse condition than it had been at the time of his arrival in 1930. (65)

In his Eight-Point Declaration, Sheng favored the introduction of local self-government to the province. Many non-Chinese leaders served in his administration, which seemed "reasonably enlightened" during these early years. (66) Yet, at the same time, he surrounded himself at Urumchi with close relatives and personal favorites. He created a "family hierarchy" which was as corrupt as Chin Shu-jen's. (67) To protect himself from his political opponents, he developed an elaborate network of secret police. Tens of thousands suffered as a result. Lin Chi-yung and Lin Pai-ya, whom I interviewed in Taiwan and Hong Kong respectively in 1963-1964, were among the victims. The accounts of their persecution turned Sheng's campaign for judicial reform into a mockery. (68)

Sheng was brought up in an age of nationalism. His strong anti-Japanese sentiments can be dated from his childhood in South Manchuria; his pro-Russian policy may have been necessary to insure that Sinkiang would remain "permanently"

(65) On the Ili revolt, known often as the Ining 伊寧 Incident, see Li Chin-wei 黎晉偉, comp., *Hsin-chiang feng-yun* 新疆風雲 [Turmoil in Sinkiang] (Hong Kong: Hai-wai shu-tien, 1947); and *Kuan-yu chieh-chueh Hsin-chiang chü-pu shih-pien wen-t'i ching-kuo chih yü-kuan wen-chien* 關於解決新疆局部事變問題經過之有關文件 [Documents Relating to the Question of Settlement of the Incident in Parts of Sinkiang] (n.p., n.d.).

(66) Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover*, p. 247. Lars-Erik Nyman compares the "modern age" of Sheng Shih-ts'ai in Sinkiang with the "golden antiquity" of Yang Tseng-hsin. See Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests*, p. 79.

(67) On Sheng's corruption, see Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 57-64; and *Sheng Shih-ts'ai huo-Hsin chi-lueh*, pp. 68-76. According to Jack Chen, Sheng was appointed minister of agriculture and forestry "after paying a huge bribe out of the wealth he had stolen from Sinkiang." See Chen, *Sinkiang Story*, p. 201. Sheng admitted to me during the 1964 interview that he had made a large "financial contribution" to Chungking when he relinquished his governorship in 1944.

(68) Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng Shih-ts'ai*, pp. 69-70.

a Chinese province. He repeatedly proclaimed that this northwestern frontier region was, indeed, an integral part of China. But, his nationalistic protestations notwithstanding, Sheng entertained a contemptuously low estimate of the central government's ability to interfere in provincial affairs. He purposely followed an independent foreign policy, and he negotiated agreements with Soviet Russia without seeking the approval of China's Foreign Ministry. By allowing regional separatism to dominate Sinkiang's politics, he impeded the process of national integration.

Most of Sheng's reform proposals were progressive and idealistic. His concern for the subject nationalities was particularly laudable. Nonetheless, he often compromised his idealism for political gains. Consequently, his Six Great Policies became empty rhetoric. In the last years of his governorship, he lost the good will of the non-Chinese peoples. Racial antagonism led to the renewal of armed conflicts. Confronted with severe opposition within the province, Sheng failed to resist the penetration of Chiang Kai-shek's forces. In 1944, his reform programs were in complete shambles, and he had to leave Sinkiang to accept a powerless cabinet position in Chungking. He was a political outcast when he was living in Taipei 臺北 during the post-1949 era.⁽⁶⁹⁾ He died in July 1970, destined to be remembered for his opportunism rather than for his idealistic vision of a "New Sinkiang."

It is simplistic, however, to suggest that Sheng's attempt at provincial reconstruction failed primarily because he was politically opportunistic. Relations between the Chinese ruling minority and the subject races had always been difficult in the history of the province. The non-Chinese ethnic groups were

(69) On Sheng's fall from power in 1944, see Chan, "Regionalism and Central Power," pp. 141-43. On March 8, 1954, at the Second Session of the National Assembly in Taipei, a group of 114 people, headed by Abdulla and Lin Chi-yung, accused Sheng of betraying China's interests by turning Sinkiang into a Soviet satellite. See Kuang *et al.*, *Sheng shih-ts'ai*, pp. 113-16. For Sheng's defense, see Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Kuan-yu kuo-min ta-hui ti-i-chieh ta-hui ti-erh-tz'u hui-i tai-piao Ai-Pai-tu-la hsien-sheng ti-szu-san-erh hao t'i-an chih shen-pien* 關於國民大會第一屆大會第二次會議代表艾拜都拉先生第四三二號提案之申辯 [A Response to Motion No. 432, Submitted by Representative Abdulla to the Second Session of the First National Assembly], March 23, 1954.

frequently divided among themselves. Although they shared similar religious beliefs, they lacked a common sense of identity. Sheng tried to unite them under his governorship by emphasizing the danger of Japanese imperialism, hoping that the threat of an external enemy would provide a strong cohesive force to bring these peoples together. He also invited their leaders to work in his administration. The programs failed for a variety of reasons; as governor, Sheng was largely responsible for their failure. Yet, his Kuomintang successors in 1944-1949 did not fare much better, and the Chinese Communists have encountered serious obstacles in their experiment with the formula of "autonomous region" in the post-1949 years.⁽⁷⁰⁾ The search for a satisfactory solution to the problems of frontier administration will continue. Sheng should be credited for having endeavored to put his reformist ideals into practice. His failure was as much a reflection of the flaws of his leadership as it was a demonstration of the complexities of Sinkiang's politics.

「盛世才在新疆的改革綱領：理想主義抑機會主義？」

中文提要

陳 福 霖

本文的主旨，是探討盛世才治新時期推行改革的動機、經過、和成效。研究的範圍，集中於盛氏的「八項宣言」，「九項新任務」，和「六大政策」。對他的「親蘇」和「民族平等」思想，更為關注。

除「前言」外，本文分為下列三節：(一)盛世才之政治思想；(二)盛世才之改革綱領及「新新疆」；(三)理想主義還是機會主義？

本文的結論分析盛氏個人的成敗，和中國近代治新政策的得失。

(70) On the Chinese Communist rule in Sinkiang during the post-1949 era, see June T. Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). Cf. Dorothy J. Solinger, *Regional Government and Political Integration in Southwest China, 1949-1954: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).